

NEWTOWN MUNICIPAL BUILD
3 PRIMROSE STREET
NEWTOWN, CONNECTICUT 064
TEL. (203) 270-4210
FAX (203) 270-4205



DEBBIE A. AURELIA
TOWN CLERK

TOWN OF NEWTOWN
OFFICE OF THE TOWN CLERK

TESTIMONY

Friday, February 22, 2013

Proposed Bill No. 5421 –
An act exempting death certificates of minors from public disclosure

Good Afternoon Senator Musto, Representative Jutila, and other members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. My name is Aileen Nosal and I serve as an Assistant Town Clerk and an Assistant Registrar of Vital Statistics for the Town of Newtown.

I am testifying today in support of the proposed Bill 5421 An Act Exempting Death Certificates of Minors from Public Disclosure, as well as similar legislation in Bills 5733, and 6157.

The horrible tragedy that occurred in Newtown this past December has shed light on how openly accessible death certificates are to the general public. Days after December 14th, our office began receiving requests from the media to obtain copies of the victims' death certificates. When the average person passes away, no one except the family and the funeral home comes in asking for copies, and yet, according to the law as it is right now, these death certificates are public information.

A death certificate contains a lot of information about the deceased. It contains information that seems obvious – the deceased's name, the date of death. However, a death certificate also includes other less obvious personal information – parents' names including mother's maiden name, informant's name and address, place of burial, residence, and social security number. This is information that can be used to locate the place of burial of the deceased – a place that should be sacred ground for the family to pay their respects. This is also information that can be used to steal a person's identity. The theft of a child's identity is less obvious because a credit report had never been established for someone so young. And with identity theft a growing problem, this is *not* information that the media - or anyone for that matter - needs to have access to, except for family and other approved groups.

The proposed bill suggests a public disclosure period of ten years after the death of a minor, but I'm asking that this bill be amended to prevent the death certificates of all deceased people (18 years and older included) from being accessible by anyone but family, funeral directors, genealogists, attorneys representing the estate, as well as others on the already statute-approved list. While no one ever wants to take access to information away, let me point out that the information on these death certificates is extremely private. When accessed by the public, it can be used to piece together a person's identity and result in invasion of privacy as well as identity theft. In the same way that our social security number is information we keep extremely guarded, so also should the information on these

death certificates. I am not opposed to the idea of a short form version of a death record which would release restricted information from the death certificate. This is further explained in my co-worker, Monica Duhancik's testimony.

Limiting the availability of a death certificate to only the necessary parties is imperative. These records should not be available to just anyone. The families in Newtown who lost their loved ones on December 14th have endured more than any of us could ever imagine. Please do your part to keep these families from enduring any more unnecessary pain. Please restrict access of vital records to only those who are absolutely necessary.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Respectfully submitted,

Aileen Nosal
Assistant Town Clerk
Town of Newtown